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General Assembly

Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

61st plenary meeting
Tuesday, 14 November 2000, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Shihab (Maldives) Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 15 *(continued)*

Elections to fill vacancies in principal organs

(b) Election of one member of the Economic and Social Council

Letter from the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly (A/55/523)

The Acting President: In connection with the General Assembly's consideration of the item before it, I should like to draw the attention of members to document A/55/523, containing a letter dated 20 October 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly.

In his letter, the Permanent Representative of Greece announces that Greece would like to relinquish its seat on the Economic and Social Council for the years 2001 and 2002 in favour of Malta.

As a result, a vacancy occurs, and a new member must therefore be elected for the remaining period of two years, commencing on 1 January 2001.

In accordance with paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 2847 (XXVI) of 20 December 1971, and taking into account the fact that the vacancy occurs from among the Western European and other States, the new member should be elected from that region.

I should like to inform the Assembly that the candidate which receives a two-thirds majority of members present and voting will be declared elected. In the case of a tie vote, there will be a restricted ballot limited to those candidates that have obtained an equal number of votes.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to that procedure?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, the election shall be held by secret ballot, and there shall be no nominations.

Regarding the vacancy, the Chairman of the Group of Western European and other States for the month of October has informed the Secretariat that the Group has endorsed Malta.

In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, we shall now proceed to the election by secret ballot.

Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that, pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the voting.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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We shall now begin the voting process. Ballot papers will now be distributed. I request representatives to use only those ballot papers and to write on them the name of the one State for which they wish to vote. A ballot paper containing more than one name from the region will be declared invalid. Names of Member States on a ballot paper which do not belong to that region will not be counted at all.

At the invitation of the Acting President, Ms. Romulus (Haiti), Mr. Al Yassin (Kuwait) and Mr. Bambissa (Mozambique) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 10.40 a.m. and resumed at 11 a.m.

The Acting President: The result of the voting is as follows:

Western European and other States	
Number of ballot papers:	127
Number of invalid ballots:	2
Number of valid ballots:	125
Abstentions:	0
Number of members voting:	125
Required two-thirds majority:	84
Number of votes obtained:	
Malta	125

Having obtained the required two-thirds majority, Malta was elected a member of the Economic and Social Council for a two-year term beginning 1 January 2001.

The Acting President: I congratulate Malta, which has been elected a member of the Economic and Social Council, and I thank the tellers for their assistance in this election.

This concludes our consideration of subitem (b) of agenda item 15.

Agenda item 18

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Draft decision (A/55/L.4)

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Papua New Guinea, Chairman of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, to introduce draft decision A/55/L.4.

Mr. Donigi (Papua New Guinea), Chairman of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples: It is an honour for me to introduce the draft decision on the observance of the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, contained in document A/55/L.4.

The effect of the draft decision would be that a special plenary meeting would be convened during the fifty-fifth session in observance of the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration. It is hoped that at that special plenary meeting there will be statements by the Chairman of the Special Committee and the chairpersons of the five regional groups to mark the occasion. That should not take too much time.

I therefore commend the draft decision to the Assembly and urge members to adopt it by acclamation.

The Acting President: There are no further speakers on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft decision A/55/L.4, entitled "Observance of the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples". May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt the draft decision?

Draft decision A/55/L.4 was adopted.

The Acting President: I should like to inform members that the date for the observance of the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples will be announced at a later date.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 18.

Agenda item 45

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Draft resolution (A/55/L.31)

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.31.

Mr. Sacirbey (Bosnia and Herzegovina): On behalf of the sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.31, I have the privilege to introduce that draft resolution, on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I have the honour also to add the following sponsors not listed on the document: Bulgaria, Denmark, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Luxembourg, Morocco, Oman and Senegal.

I will be very brief because the draft resolution has enjoyed wide support in its development. We would like to thank all for their contributions and for the constructive manner in which our dialogue was conducted. Because of those things, we anticipate consensus adoption.

This seems a far cry from some of the past debates on this item; it would appear that we have come full circle. Unfortunately, too many of the old issues still remain outstanding, from the arrest of indicted war criminals and the proper functioning of institutions to the return of refugees and displaced persons and economic rejuvenation. We have again re-emphasized those issues in the draft resolution before the Assembly.

What is new in the text, thank God, is more positive, and that is primarily the democratic change in the region. This will, in the longer term, have a most favourable impact on Bosnia and Herzegovina and discourage the forces of disintegration within and outside Bosnia, which still unfortunately remain.

It is also clear that Bosnia and Herzegovina must take greater charge of its own future and that the future lies in Bosnia and Herzegovina being accepted as an equal partner in the Euro-Atlantic family, as well as in continuing to develop its unique relationships and roles throughout the world. For this reason, we are most proud and pleased to highlight Bosnia and Herzegovina's contributions, including those to peacekeeping. Also, as a consequence of the Srebrenica report — and others, I might add — asked for by this General Assembly, we have helped initiate a constructive re-evaluation of peace-building, peacekeeping and peace-making challenges to the United Nations, through the Brahimi report.

What probably remains as the main challenge in the next year is to review the efficacy of the current international efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These contributions are most necessary still. However, they should be rationalized and made more efficient, and Bosnians must be treated more as partners. Investment should replace aid. Consultation should supersede dictate. The longer-term sociological and psychological effects of the current situation must be taken into consideration. And more elections with certain desired changes cannot substitute for the gradual process of truly helping establish the environment for progressive economic, democratic and political development.

I would like to add that the Arabic draft is not entirely in line with the original text, and therefore adoption of the draft resolution may be delayed. We will be informed as to how quickly it can be brought into line and the draft resolution can be formally adopted.

Mr. Walker (United States of America): The United States is pleased to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/55/L.31, on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is an especially propitious time to consider the progress that has been achieved and to review the tasks that remain so that Dayton's dream of a democratic, tolerant and multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina can be fully realized.

It has now been five years since the signing of the Dayton Accords. The three original signers of that historic agreement are no longer in power: one has died; one has been overthrown in a peaceful revolution; and the other has retired from the Presidency. New democratic leaders have emerged in Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, changing the regional dynamic and opening the door to more progress on refugee returns, succession issues, war crimes and other complicated matters.

As the draft resolution makes clear, there has been slow but steady progress in a number of areas. Refugee returns to minority areas are more than one-and-one-half times greater than last year. Privatization of the economy has begun. There has been some limited reduction in the size of the militaries, and a Bosnian multi-ethnic United Nations civilian police

contingent is serving in East Timor. But real progress in addressing these and other problems will not be made until more is done to strengthen Bosnia and Herzegovina's central political structures. Overlapping authorities and jurisdictions have complicated even the simplest governing decisions and allowed rejectionists, separatists and criminals to hold up progress, even when the people are yearning for reform.

A perfect example of this is the slow progress we have seen in implementing the New York Declaration. One year ago tomorrow, in a historic meeting with the Security Council, the three Presidents of Bosnia and Herzegovina committed themselves to a series of measures designed to strengthen the central Government. Unfortunately, only part of that Declaration has been fulfilled. Too much of it, including a unified passport and a State Border Service, had to be imposed by the High Representative after hard-line Serb Democratic Party (SDS) deputies opposed these measures. We applaud the High Representative for taking resolute action and using the full authority of his office in this case. We will continue to encourage him to deal with obstructionists in a similarly resolute manner.

Progress in strengthening institutions and ensuring that extremists and obstructionists are not allowed to block Dayton's implementation would help resolve continuing problems in several areas which have been addressed in this draft resolution. More transparency and accountability would help address the problem of corruption and clear the way for progress in privatization and economic reform. Implementation of needed property legislation and removal of local criminal leaders would help accelerate refugee returns. Strengthening freedom of the press would help curtail and expose abuses. And the apprehension of war criminals still at large would help deliver justice and bring a degree of closure to all those who are suffering because of past war crimes. The United States continues to believe that there will be no lasting peace in the Balkans until all of the outstanding indictees of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia are brought to justice.

Last Saturday the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina participated in their fourth democratic elections since the signing of the Dayton Accords five years ago. The preliminary results continue to show a trend toward greater political pluralism. We hope that the new leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina will commit themselves to addressing the difficult issues that are the focus of this draft resolution and strive to build a multi-ethnic State based on freedom and tolerance.

Mr. Šimonović (Croatia): There could hardly be a more appropriate time to discuss the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina than today. On the one hand, we are only a few days away from the fifth anniversary of the conclusion of the Dayton Accords, an agreement that, after years of bitter fighting, brought peace to the country and created a political and legal framework for its future. On the other hand, very important elections in that country have just been concluded and we await the final outcome.

Much has been done in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but more still needs to be accomplished. I shall not praise the positive developments and achievements, which certainly exist. Rather, I would like to use this opportunity to point out what needs to be done if we want to have Bosnia and Herzegovina functioning without the visible presence and influence of the international community. At least three factors are crucial here: the arrest and trial of all indicted war criminals, the return of refugees and displaced persons and economic revitalization.

We should all be perfectly aware that the Dayton Accords consist of a set of conditions that are highly interdependent and interrelated. Without all of them being fully implemented, the goal of achieving a self-sustainable, democratic and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina will not be accomplished. That is not yet the case. While in certain areas positive developments are visible — such as the development of State institutions — in many they are not. The most acknowledged problem is definitely the lack of minority returns to all areas, and especially to Republika Srpska.

The new Croatian Administration, soon after winning the election, took many significant steps to speed up the process of the return of its citizens of Serbian origin. One of those steps included the signing of a bilateral agreement with the Republika Srpska related to the two-way return of refugees. Croatia respected and implemented the agreement, while the Government of Republika Srpska has not. Croatia will continue to create conditions for the return of all its citizens, but will also insist on the return of Croats to their homes in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We strongly believe that Dayton has to be fully implemented by all parties. In this regard, bringing to justice those indicted for war crimes will not only serve the noble purpose of making a moral and just remedy, but will also meet practical ends. Croatia agrees with those who recognize the link between the process of minority returns and the fact that the most notorious war crime perpetrators are still at large. Only a few weeks ago one Bosnian newspaper published a letter sent by Radovan Karadzic to some Republika Srpska officials, giving them clear instructions on what to do and how to proceed on a set of specific issues.

The Republic of Croatia therefore welcomes the report on the war criminals in Republika Srpska prepared by the International Crisis Group and hopes that The Hague Tribunal and other relevant international actors have taken note of its findings. Bosnia and Herzegovina will never achieve the rule of law and interethnic reconciliation until major war criminals appear before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia or locally authorized courts.

On the issue of reconciliation, we commend the initiative taken by the High Representative to acquire land in the municipality of Srebrenica and to make it the final resting place of the victims of the massacre that took place there in 1995.

At the beginning of this statement I mentioned the elections. One could easily say that this is the year of elections in the region, a region which has Bosnia positioned at its centre. It all started with January elections in my country, followed by elections in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, then in Kosovo, and the latest in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These processes brought about a significant change in political elites, who now include people with fresh ideas and energy to start something new and positive.

On the part of Croatia, a new and constructive approach towards Bosnia and Herzegovina has been clearly evident. The Croatian President, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister have each visited Sarajevo on different occasions and reassured the leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina that Croatia fully respects Bosnia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Nevertheless, Croatia will continue to be of assistance to Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but in a transparent manner acceptable to both countries.

We support the recent decision of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina and firmly believe that the equality and sovereignty of all constituent peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina has to become the norm and practice throughout the territory of the State. This is primarily important for the Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina, given that they are the smallest constituent nation. Simply put, the main source of security in the minds of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina is as follows: for the Bosniacs, their numbers; for the Serbs, their entity; whereas for the Croats it can only be their parity.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is another neighbour of Bosnia and Herzegovina and a party to the Dayton Accords. We welcome the political change in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its rapid integration into international organizations like the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, but we would encourage our Yugoslav neighbours to persist in their attempt to establish good-neighbourly relations and to give input into stabilizing the region. First and foremost, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia should recognize Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign State and establish diplomatic relations with it without preconditions, as it agreed to do in Dayton five years ago. Furthermore, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's acceptance of the principle of the equality of all five successor States, reaffirmed in this year's draft resolution on Bosnia and Herzegovina, represents important confirmation of the existing borders between the republics of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Finally, I would like to speak about the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As we have noted, the political environment in the region has changed and has become conducive to the further stabilization of Bosnia and Herzegovina. While this is not enough, it is promising. The results of the elections should be implemented and the rhetoric should be toned down. For Bosnia and Herzegovina it is very important to swiftly join the Council of Europe and to continue on the path towards democratization, development, the rule of law and the protection of human rights, as well as further integration into the political and economic mainstream of Europe. This integration, as with the integration of any other State, should be based upon individual merits and achievements, as set out in the draft resolution on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Handling affairs in Bosnia and Herzegovina always requires caution. There are still obstacles, but the desired objective is clear and worthy of effort and international support: Bosnia and Herzegovina as a democratic and prosperous State and a country of three constituent nations and equal citizens.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): In a few days we will observe the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord, which was done in Paris. Bosnia and Herzegovina has now emerged as a sovereign State, with internationally agreed borders. The people in Bosnia have had to work hard during the last five years to restore their war-ravaged State to normalcy. Not many of their efforts have been rewarded with success, but some notable progress has been achieved. A lot, however, still remains to be done.

The Dayton Peace Agreement is the most practical basis for peace objectives and the return to normalcy to be pursued. There is uneasiness over the slow implementation of the Peace Agreement. There is a long list of deadlines that have not been met, and there are promises that are yet to be fulfilled. Much of this has been attributed to the leadership's lack of commitment. Unfortunately, the leaders' party goals and their nationalist agendas have been given priority over the well-being of citizens, and the principal State institutions are still dominated by ethnic rather than State interests. The political climate that prevailed in the region for so long is often considered a chief obstacle. With a change in the political atmosphere, we are cautiously optimistic that the implementation process will receive a boost and that a much faster pace of progress will be attainable.

There are a number of priorities that must be vigorously pursued in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We outline these in right earnest and with a genuine motivation for the betterment of the people of a country with which Bangladesh has great friendship.

First, economic reform must be promoted and conditions for self-sustaining economic growth created. Bosnia and Herzegovina must move away from the legacies of the past and make the transition to a dynamic civil society and a market-driven, vibrant economy. The need for continued support by the partners of the peace implementation process is vital. This will set the stage for success, despite the hurdles that have been erected by the obstructionist political forces.

Secondly, there is a need to consolidate institutions and to ensure that they function effectively and properly. Smoothly functioning institutions are critical for long-term stability and prosperity.

Thirdly, Bosnia has entered a stage of the peace process in which donor support is declining significantly and rapidly. The increasingly scant flow of resources from the international community should now be directed towards building the necessary institutional framework to allow for private investment, both domestic and foreign. The donor countries and agencies should ensure that the process is not abandoned midway, before it is firmly set on course towards a self-sustaining economy.

Fourthly, the international community should continue to support the establishment of the essential prerequisites for economic growth — modern legislation, deregulation, a viable banking system, transparent privatization and investment protection, making the rule of law a reality. Some progress has already been achieved; there is more to come.

Fifthly, attention should be directed in particular at capacity-building: modernizing the judiciary with strong and independent courts; training police and border-service personnel; supporting key legislation projects; and building a professional merit-based civil service, among other measures.

Finally, the return of refugees and internally displaced persons remains a priority. The latest figures from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees show that by the end of August 2000 about 30,000 minority returns were registered. The figures will be much higher when non-registered returns are taken into account. The most important thing is that these returns have taken place in or near the towns of Srebrenica and Foca — towns that are synonymous with massacre and destruction. The tough implementation of the property law must be credited for this. However, a lot more needs to be done to restore the confidence of refugees and internally displaced persons so that they return to their pre-war homes.

Economic reform, the return of displaced persons and refugees and the development of common institutions remain the priorities for Bosnia and Herzegovina. These are the areas identified by the High Representative for the implementation of the peace process. Although it has moved at a slow pace, Bosnia

and Herzegovina has come a long way over the past five years in attaining these goals. We need to appreciate the fact that, with the legacies of the past haunting the present, and with the bitter memories of protracted and devastating war and massacre at the back of the mind, it is not easy to be fully ready for the prompt restoration of well-functioning statehood. We applaud the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina for their continued efforts to build a well-functioning sovereign State, despite these difficulties. We are fully cognizant of the many obstacles standing in their way. That is why the world should stand by and continue to provide necessary support, assistance and encouragement, rather than being impatient at the perceived slowness of progress in that country.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries, Cyprus and Malta, as well as Norway, align themselves with this statement.

I should like first of all to commend the work of the international community's High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement. For almost one and a half years, Mr. Wolfgang Petritsch has been discharging his mandate with energy and tenacity. He has spared no effort in promoting peace, reconciliation and economic development in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He can rest assured of the full support of the European Union in accomplishing this long-term task that has been entrusted to him.

I should also like to pay tribute to the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the International Police Task Force, the Stabilization Force, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the non-governmental organizations, which have been working day after day, each in its own field, to reconstruct a multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina that is closely tied to Europe.

Five years after the signing of the Dayton Agreements, Bosnia and Herzegovina, like the rest of the region, has made considerable progress. The reconstruction of the country is under way, with significant achievements being made. People belonging to minority groups are returning to their homes in increasing numbers. Political pluralism, freedom and security are developing, as was shown by the fact that the general elections of 11 November took place in favourable conditions. These developments confirm that the course set by the Peace Agreements was the right one and that there is no alternative for Bosnia and Herzegovina to the full implementation of their provisions. On 15 November 1999, in the New York Declaration, the Joint Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina reaffirmed its attachment to the implementation of the Agreements.

The results, however, have not yet lived up to the expectations, in particular because obstructionism persists. Certain policies and practices based on clan or ethnic considerations prevent the population from benefiting fully from the advantages offered by the Agreements. The Peace Implementation Council, which met in Brussels on 23 and 24 May, therefore defined the areas for which change is a priority: institution-building, economic reform and the return of refugees.

With regard to institution-building, we note that progress has been slow. Greater commitment on the part of the Bosnian leadership to the general interest, particularly at the level of the common institutions, is required. We must hope that the political leaders elected on 11 November will work in this direction. Such progress would help to deepen the process through which Bosnians themselves take ownership of their common future. We hope that this will soon be the case.

The High Representative has been called upon to use his powers in a tactful and diplomatic way, when he considers it necessary, in order to accelerate the implementation of the Peace Agreements. The most recent example of this occurred on 25 October, when a single passport was created for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, in accordance with his mandate, Mr. Wolfgang Petritsch had to dismiss some 20 Bosnian leaders who had impeded the implementation of the Dayton Agreements.

For its part, on 1 July, the constitutional court in Bosnia and Herzegovina handed down a decision that I must commend, in the case relating to the constituent peoples. By reaffirming in constitutional terms that none of the three peoples — Serbs, Croats or Bosniacs — can be discriminated against in the territory as a whole or any part thereof, the court has laid a stone in the building of the State of Bosnia and

Herzegovina. That decision should now be implemented.

Turning to the economy, reform must be enhanced, as the Peace Implementation Council has emphasized. The difficult economic situation requires this type of progress. The restrictive framework created by certain regulations must be relaxed. The control of political parties over commercial and financial activities must be reduced. Corruption must be fought. Particular efforts are required in the area of privatization projects, which should be carried out quickly and with the necessary transparency. Furthermore, the adoption by the two entities of new legislation concerning pensions should not be postponed any longer.

As regards the return of refugees, the latest report of the High Representative has given us reason to hope. Obstacles in the area of security are receding, but an improvement in the economic situation will be required in order to promote lasting returns.

The accelerating democratic changes in South-Eastern Europe will have a positive impact on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Progress has already been noted as a result of the Croatian elections of January this year. President Kostunica's recent visit to Sarajevo has opened the way to new prospects of normalization throughout the region. The European Union encourages and strongly supports this process. Its commitment to promote peace and development in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been considerable. The European Union is the principal troop contributor, the main donor and the main supplier of technical assistance. I should like also to recall the active role of the Union in the signing on 12 July of the Mostar document, whose implementation will contribute to putting an end to division in that city.

In regional terms, the Union promotes cooperation projects, supports economic integration and encourages stronger ties with Europe in the context of the Stability Pact.

On 24 November, the Union will reaffirm its political commitment at the Zagreb Summit, which will bring together for the first time the countries of the European Union and those of the western Balkans.

The flourishing of democracy, reconciliation and the development of trust and cooperation among all the countries of the region will create new prospects for a phased rapprochement with the European Union.

Mr. Bohayevskiy (Ukraine): Five years ago, when the Dayton/Paris Peace Accords were signed, many of us cherished the hope that domestic peace and stability would very soon prevail in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The achievement of this goal has taken longer than, and not been as easy as, we initially anticipated. However, we have every reason to acknowledge that the country has been moving in that direction and has made substantial progress, which, to a great extent, has been made possible by the significant amount of assistance provided by the international community, including the United Nations.

Still, a lot remains to be done to ensure the full realization of the goals that have been set. We have to remember that Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced the worst kind of destruction in the war, which took so many lives and forced many people to leave their homes. Despite the undeniably positive changes in this country, many of the scars inflicted by the war remain.

Just two months ago, in the statement he made from this rostrum, Mr. Jadranko Prlić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, confirmed the commitment of his country and of its authorities to continue with efforts to achieve peace and stabilization, to root out all causes of intolerance and to eradicate everything that in the recent past has poisoned relations with neighbouring countries.

Here we can also see positive signs. Since the Foreign Minister spoke in the Assembly, we have also witnessed very encouraging changes in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, whose people voted on 24 September last in favour of democracy. In this respect, the new situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has created a good basis for further reconciliation between and among the former Yugoslav republics and throughout the whole region.

We must therefore continue to support, at both the national and international levels, this very important positive development, as it can bring us closer to achieving the goal of establishing general peace and stability in the Balkans.

The United Nations must continue to lend its support to Bosnia and Herzegovina, because that country still needs an international presence and

assistance in eliminating the consequences of war and in preparing itself for self-sustained development. There is no alternative if we want to help that country take on a larger share of responsibility as a United Nations Member State and as a country that today is striving to bring about a truly democratic society and a better life for its people.

Last Sunday, 12 November, general elections were held in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For the nation, that day was yet another test of its aspirations for democratic change. The results of those elections will show whether they have met our highest expectations. Let us hope that they will not be assessed as a lost opportunity, but rather become a further step towards ending the politics of fear and division in the country.

In conclusion, I wish to convey our message of encouragement to the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina who are here today. On behalf of our delegation, I want to assure them that Ukraine welcomes all of the positive developments taking place in their country today. Ukraine is ready to cooperate with Bosnia and Herzegovina in all areas of mutual interest. This interest was recently confirmed during a visit to Sarajevo by a delegation of Ukrainian experts in the area of transportation. There are many other areas in which our two countries could benefit from their cooperation.

We are the United Nations, and, as Member States of this international Organization, we should not only present and promote our national interests, but also help each other in the realization of our domestic priorities and goals. United, we will be more confident and stronger. We believe that Bosnia and Herzegovina will be a test case in this respect.

In conclusion, I should like to state that Ukraine will support any action that will facilitate further democratic changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Ahmad (Malaysia): The international community has made a long-term commitment to the achievement of just and durable peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Nearly five years after its signing, the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina — the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement — continues to be implemented with the sustained support and active engagement of the international community.

The Malaysian delegation is gratified that there has indeed been substantial progress in the implementation of the Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The presence of the multinational Stabilization Force (SFOR) has significantly contributed to providing a secure environment whereby the Bosnian people in most parts of the country have begun to experience security and relative normalcy. The Office of the High Representative continues to undertake important efforts and initiatives to establish and strengthen the Bosnian common institutions, as well as to ensure their effective functioning in accordance with the Peace Agreement. Meanwhile, the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the International Police Task Force, is playing a major role in the restructuring and reform of the Bosnian police forces and judiciary. All these efforts, including those by other international organizations that are actively engaged in the Bosnian peace process, deserve our commendation.

The success of the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina still depends very much at this stage on the continuing and active involvement of the international community. Despite the clear achievements that have been made so far, much remains to be done to consolidate peace and to build Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent, unified, multi-ethnic and multicultural State within its internationally recognized borders. The remaining critical tasks of the international community must be accomplished so that peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina will be irreversible, and so that the country will emerge out of the current protective care of the international community.

My delegation recalls that, following the initiative of the High Representative, the ministerial meeting of the Peace Implementation Council — which was held in Brussels last May, and in which Malaysia participated — set three key strategic targets for advancing the Bosnian peace process: strengthening the State institutions, comprehensive economic reform and the accelerated return of refugees and displaced persons.

Malaysia supported and endorsed this three-pronged strategy, just as we did the concept of ownership espoused by the High Representative, and the New York Declaration adopted by the Bosnian Joint Presidency exactly one year ago. We believe that all these efforts provide a clear framework within which

the international community and the leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina should work together to bring about further progress in the peace process.

It is indeed encouraging that some progress has been made in those key strategic areas, including the recent re-establishment of the Council of Ministers and the appointment of its Chair. There has also been an increase in so-called minority returns, which are now more than double the number of such returns during the same period last year. Further determined efforts are necessary to promote the return process, which is crucial for lasting peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Existing political and administrative obstructions to the return process must be overcome effectively. Equally important is the fostering of economic, educational and labour-market opportunities for returnees. We support the ongoing work of the High Representative to ensure the full and vigorous implementation of the package of property legislation, in order to further increase the rate of return.

Meanwhile, economic reform is still lagging very far behind. Further strenuous efforts on the part of the Bosnian leadership are therefore pivotal for progress to be made in this area.

At the same time, continued emphasis on reconciliation should remain one of the most important priorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The consequences of ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity in the country must be reversed, and justice must be done, and done quickly. In this regard, my delegation wishes to underline once again the particular importance of the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, which the international community must continue to strongly support. The early arrest and prosecution of all indicted war criminals, especially the likes of Radovan Karadzić and Ratko Mladić, will not only serve to mete out justice, but also contribute towards accomplishing the long-term goal of national reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

My delegation commends the Bosnians and the international community for the successful holding of national elections last Saturday, 11 November 2000. That the elections were held in a free and fair manner is a strong tribute to the international community and to the Bosnian people themselves. We await the final and official outcome of the elections. Malaysia strongly calls upon the leaders who are elected to work together among themselves and with the international community to strengthen the political, economic and social foundations for reintegration and reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina — a paramount responsibility envisaged in the Peace Agreement. At this point, however, we cannot but express our serious concern over the illegal referendum that was organized by the Croatian Democratic Union. That referendum clearly goes against the very spirit and intent of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

It is our earnest hope that the recent developments in the region will augur well for a speedier implementation of the Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We call on all Bosnia's neighbours to support and cooperate with Bosnia and Herzegovina in realizing the full implementation of the Peace Agreement.

For its part, Malaysia is proud to have been associated with the efforts to rebuild peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We have contributed funds from the Government and the Malaysian public for economic rehabilitation and infrastructure reconstruction in Bosnia. Under its Technical Cooperation Programme, Malaysia is also making available training and other facilities, as well as sharing our experiences in the field of socio-economic development and in the successful implementation of privatization in Malaysia. We will continue to participate in the International Police Task Force and the Peace Implementation Council, as well as in the work carried out by the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the United Nations.

Mr. Pamir (Turkey): Being also a Balkan country, Turkey has always been directly involved in the quest to create a peaceful and stable Balkans that is poised to move towards prosperity in security, and has made incessant efforts to that end. With this aim, we have always tried to foster friendly relations and enlightened cooperation with all the countries in the region.

Given our strong bonds, stemming from a common history that time further enriches, Bosnia and Herzegovina has traditionally ranked as a priority for our foreign policy. We therefore regarded the re-establishment of the multi-ethnic and multicultural status of Bosnia and Herzegovina, through the preservation of its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized

borders, as of paramount importance for securing peace and stability in the Balkans, and hence in the continent.

The developments that have taken place during the past year — from the adoption of the New York Declaration exactly a year ago to the recent elections — testify to the accuracy of the key strategic targets set by the Peace Implementation Council for Bosnia and Herzegovina, namely, the consolidation of State institutions, economic reform and the return of refugees and displaced persons.

As a member of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council, Turkey strongly believes that bringing about durable solutions depends on the achievement of these clear targets. The way to reach these targets is through the full implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords. However, while not playing down the many accomplishments in the implementation of the civilian aspect of the Dayton Peace Accords, I should also add that much remains to be done in this respect.

Meanwhile, mutual confidence among the Bosniacs, the Croats and the Serbs remains the key for achieving lasting peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a corollary, the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the international community should take advantage of each and every opportunity to advance the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords.

In this connection, we believe that the aftermath of the recent general elections, completed in due order thanks to the common sense of the people of Bosnia and the commendable efforts of High Representative Mr. Petritsch, as well as those of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mission, offers such an opportunity.

It is now the duty of all leaders representing their people at the cantonal, entity and state levels to work hard for the political stability and economic development of the country, at the same time resisting, hand in hand with the people, any attempt by any group or circle aiming to derail the path to normalcy. We firmly believe that the people of Bosnia will maintain a firm hold on this challenge. We hope that the governing bodies will be established without delay so that the essential work toward structural reforms can start as soon as possible.

Among the many urgent issues here, I should highlight the need for the passing of new electoral legislation to pave the way for Bosnia and Herzegovina's admission into the Council of Europe.

Last, but not least, I would be remiss if I did not stress the ongoing need to have the international community firmly involved in the developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We cannot withhold such support from the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina while their country moves through a crucial stage on its way to becoming a full member of the European family of nations.

Mr. Darwish (Egypt) *(spoke in Arabic)*: Over a whole decade, Egypt has been closely observing with grave concern the deterioration of the situation in the territories of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the eruption of racial conflicts and aggression perpetrated by one group against another. We have also followed the failure of the international community and the United Nations to immediately put an end to acts of violence and aggression and to halt the spread of ethnic cleansing. We all know now what happened in Srebrenica and the failure of the international community and the international Organization to protect and safeguard the Bosnians. This has led to similar failures in African regions. It also led to a comprehensive and integrated review of peacekeeping operations and of United Nations policies.

Today the General Assembly is discussing the issue of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Things have greatly improved through the changes that Yugoslavia has witnessed recently, and through the readmission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations on an equal footing with the other four successor States of former Yugoslavia.

The Egyptian position vis-à-vis the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is based on a number of unchanging elements reaffirmed in the Dayton Peace Accords. These are as follows: first, the importance of respecting the sovereignty and independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its territorial integrity as a single State, made up of two multi-racial entities; secondly, the importance of respect for human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the right of refugees and internally displaced persons to return to their homeland in peace; and thirdly, the importance of trying those who are charged with perpetrating war crimes in Bosnia. These are considered an inherent part of the

successful implementation of the peace accords. In addition, all parties concerned are urged to fully cooperate with the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991, established by the Security Council for this noble purpose.

In view of the unchanging Egyptian position, and in order to find out how the Peace Accords have been implemented so far, we are satisfied that the voices expressing separatism or scepticism about Bosnia's unity and independence have decreased. We are also pleased that the activation of institutions reflects the importance of this unity and of the principle of sovereignty at the international level. But this does not mean that we should be complacent. We must continue to reaffirm and support this element and its institutional mechanisms as a central part of the Peace Accords, which will not be achieved unless there is full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as one unified multi-racial country.

Egypt also welcomes the breakthroughs made in the implementation of the Peace Agreement signed in Paris on 14 December 1995. These breakthroughs followed efforts made to promote reconstruction and improve the security situation, as well as the efforts of local councils in cooperation with the United Nations mission to develop joint institutions that would guarantee Bosnia and Herzegovina's functioning as a unified and modern democratic State.

Egypt has supported the United Nations efforts aimed at supporting the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the United Nations International Police Task Force, sent there in order to observe and safeguard human rights and the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. Here we are honoured to point out that Egypt was part of the International Police Task Force and provided a number of efficient officers.

It is quite clear that there is still a lot to be done before we feel content with the implementation of this important component of the Peace Accords. The rate of refugees returning to their homeland is still lower than our expectations. Also, the provision of security and safety to those refugees and internally displaced persons is still below the required level to convince them to return voluntarily to their homeland, particularly in minority areas.

Egypt believes in the importance of totally implementing the Dayton Peace Accords so that everybody fully cooperates with the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia. Those two important elements are part and parcel of bringing about a stable and just peace for the peoples of the region.

For our part, we will continue to provide support and assistance to the people and Government of Bosnia in all areas.

Finally, on the basis of its unswerving position of supporting reconstruction and consolidation with the objective of returning matters to their original situation, Egypt has supported the draft resolution before the Assembly today contained in document A/55/L.31.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) *(spoke in Russian)*: In exactly one month, the fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina will be commemorated. The Russian Federation, as an active participant in the Bosnian settlement at all its stages, welcomes the progress achieved to date in implementing this Agreement. Its signing has allowed for diverse, sometimes contradictory, interests of the three Bosnian peoples and neighbouring States to be taken into account, especially Yugoslavia and Croatia, and to lay the foundation for Bosnian statehood on the basis of two entities with equal rights and three constituent peoples.

The Agreements reached in 1995 have lost none of their importance today.

Moreover, in spite of the generally stable situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is too soon for the world community to be complacent. We still need to make the process of the Bosnian settlement permanent and irreversible and to strengthen multi-ethnic statehood in observance of the rights of all the peoples of that country. The Russian Federation still feels that this process should be implemented in strict conformity with the Peace Agreement, the resolutions of the Security Council and other international documents on a settlement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Any arbitrary interpretation of this mandate on the part of the international organizations is inadmissible. A revision of Dayton would inevitably destroy the balance of interests and be fraught with new tensions,

not only within Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also beyond its borders.

The lengthy experience of international efforts to implement the Peace Agreement proves that the Bosnians themselves and their political leaders must assume particular responsibility for furthering the peace process and for the destiny of their own country. All parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina need to demonstrate practical political will strictly to implement the Dayton provisions and to achieve genuine multi-ethnic reconciliation and the effective post-conflict reconstruction of the country. We are satisfied that the leading political forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina are demonstrating a growing understanding of these problems, which was the specific purpose of the New York Declaration of the Joint Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is high time to put it into practice.

We feel that priority should be given to overcoming all the remaining difficulties as soon as possible, with concern for the appropriate level of cooperation of both ethnic entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, not only in all Bosnian state organs, but also with the leading international bodies in the country, especially the High Representative, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Mission as a whole. The activation of such interaction will allow us to achieve a breakthrough on unresolved issues. We hope that this will be helped by the results of the elections held in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 11 November. In particular, we need to see the rapid adoption of electoral laws; the ongoing reorganization of the Bosnian police on a multi-ethnic basis; reform of the judicial system; the creation of a modern market economy; a campaign against corruption and organized crime; and a solution to the problem of the return of refugees and internally displaced persons.

We welcome the commitment made by the Bosnian leadership, expressed in the New York Declaration, to the task of strengthening military cooperation between forces, including the creation of a joint subdivision for United Nations peace-building operations. Furthermore, we feel it counterproductive artificially to force the issue of a single political defence policy, primarily in the creation of a single army. Such action can only disturb the fragile balance of political stability in the mutual relations between the entities.

We also feel that the Final Arbitration Award on the Brcko District should be implemented so as to avoid raising tensions and to stabilize the situation in the region as much as possible, in conformity with the Peace Agreement, by finding solutions to remaining issues that are acceptable to all parties.

As to the work in Bosnia and Herzegovina of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991, we wish once again to emphasize the importance of separating this activity from current political circumstances and of bringing it into strict conformity with the Statute of the Tribunal and the decisions of the Security Council. It is time to end the practice of hunting down indictees on the basis of so-called sealed indictments issued by the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, which is not within the Force's mandate of stabilizing Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Russian Federation feels that the draft resolution under consideration today is generally aimed towards the achievement of a number of Dayton provisions, total inter-ethnic reconciliation and the effective post-conflict reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a democratic European State. We are convinced that recent political developments in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will have a positive impact on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially in the Republika Srpska. Attesting to this is the statement made by Yugoslav President Kostunica during his visit to Sarajevo concerning his readiness to establish diplomatic relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and his commitment to supporting the Dayton Peace Agreement.

For its part, the Russian Federation will make a constructive contribution to finding a solution to the pending issues on the agenda of the Bosnian settlement and to the establishment of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a single, democratic, multi-ethnic and prosperous State.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): Five years have passed since the conclusion of the Dayton Peace Agreement. It cannot be repeated and recalled often enough that the Peace Agreement ended the most brutal and devastating armed conflict in Europe since the Second World War. The Peace Agreement in all its aspects and phases created a framework for life in peace and laid

the foundation of a new constitutional arrangement for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It has also been a year since the historic visit of the members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina to New York and their participation in a meeting of the Security Council. The New York Declaration adopted on that occasion has reconfirmed the commitment of the Presidency to the key tasks in the implementation of peace.

The General Assembly's present consideration of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is marked by several encouraging events in that country's neighbourhood.

First, following the elections in Croatia almost a year ago and the changes in its policies towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, the relations between the two countries have been normalized and improved significantly. Croatia has, through its actions, reconfirmed its respect for the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Secondly, the recent change of regime in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, followed by the first visit of the Yugoslav President to the Bosnian capital, encourages hope for a change of policy of that country towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. That change would considerably influence the speed of the implementation of the Peace Agreement by the Bosnians themselves.

The unconditional establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries is a priority and probably a starting point. The early conclusion of the agreement on special parallel relations between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Republika Srpska is of prime importance as well. It would give Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina the needed confidence and guarantees that were lacking during the years when the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was isolated from the international community. As a consequence, both agreements should strengthen inter-ethnic and inter-entity integration within Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A third encouraging circumstance is that the establishment of democratic authorities in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has enabled the integration of that country into the international community and into the region. Hence, conditions have finally been set for the much-needed peace, stability, reconciliation and reconstruction of the region as a whole. In this context, Slovenia supports the convening of the upcoming Zagreb summit of the countries of the region and the European Union.

We would refrain from commenting on the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina since official results have not been announced yet. However, regardless of who will form the future Governments, they should be led by the mandate of the people to implement the Peace Agreement and to speed up democratization and economic recovery. They should lead the country away from the hatreds, poverty and isolation of the past and towards a better life and a common future in the European structures. These are ideals that we believe people in Bosnia and Herzegovina voted for.

The post-conflict stabilization of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a process — slow but continuing. Several essential elements of the Peace Agreement remain to be fulfilled. We are convinced that the integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina into European structures, starting with the Council of Europe, would significantly strengthen this process. We also commend and support fully the High Representative in his efforts to pursue three strategic priorities to help Bosnian citizens achieve this Europeanization of the country: comprehensive economic reform, accelerated refugee return and the strengthening of the State institutions.

The return of refugees remains one of the central issues for the normalization of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We note that the number of minority returns almost doubled this year. However, there are still hundreds of thousands of people who remain either displaced or refugees. Our optimism has to be realistic, especially since the major breakthrough that the international community has been expecting for the past few years has not yet happened. And time is not working in favour of the return. For these reasons, the right to return must remain one of the basic human rights of the people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the urgent establishment of viable conditions for return must be one of the priorities for the new Government.

There is no reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina without the completion of the work of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. The Tribunal was established to prosecute persons whose actions and policies brought the destruction to the region. It continues to be important — maybe now more than ever — that all those who committed crimes against humanity and are responsible for or

participated in the genocide be brought to justice. The international community owes this to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We commend the efforts of the Tribunal in bringing justice to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are pleased to note the willingness of the High Representative and the Stabilization Force to use their authority to enforce the provisions of the Peace Agreement, including the provisions concerning compliance with the orders of the Tribunal.

At the same time, we are concerned with the fact that the work of the Tribunal could go on for another 16 years. We expect the Security Council to speedily consider several solutions proposed by the judges of the Tribunal to shorten the time-frame for the conclusion of the Tribunal's work.

I wish also to touch upon one unresolved issue, the resolution of which would also contribute positively to the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina: that of the succession of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which ceased to exist. It is essential that a resolution of this issue be based upon respect for the principle of legal equality of all successor States, as determined by the Badinter Arbitration Commission, in order to contribute to lasting peace and stability in the region. The recent changes in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia promise to remove this obstacle to the normalization of relations among the successor States to the former Yugoslavia, and we are looking forward to an early conclusion of this issue within the Peace Implementation Council's working group on succession.

Demining is an area that Slovenia considers important in the normalization of life in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Successful demining not only will allow a more adequate return of refugees but will also help to restore economic activity in the country. This is the reason for our continuing commitment to the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance. The Trust Fund has in the past year alone successfully cleared as much as two thirds of all the territory that has been cleared of mines in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or 3 million square metres. The Trust Fund, as the most cost-effective and most efficient way to clear mines in Bosnia and Herzegovina, has attracted until now donations from 22 Governments in the amount of $56 million. We would like to encourage other countries to join us in our efforts to clear Bosnia and Herzegovina of all mines.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize the importance of the continued interest of the United Nations and its General Assembly in the post-conflict reconstruction in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We hope that the draft resolution before us, of which Slovenia is proud to be a sponsor, will guide the action of all involved in the effort to establish just and durable peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): The situation in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina over the last year has continued to indicate that smooth and fast progress towards the implementation of the Peace Agreement still faces significant resistance. Although some important progress has been noted, such as the establishment of a new Council of Ministers and of three new ministries, it is disappointing that a lack of political will on the part of those who focus on ethnic issues threatens the effective functioning of the institutions.

Overall, the important issue of the search for self-sustaining stability in the Balkans is high on the agenda, but we are still far from the goals set in this regard. Despite slow but steady progress in the implementation of the 1995 Peace Agreement, which is the prerequisite for peace and stability in the region, there are a number of underlying challenges yet to be overcome. They include short-sighted views still maintained by certain groups, parties and ethnic divisions, as well as delays in institution-building, judicial reform and economic regeneration. Surmounting these challenges demands greater efforts on the part of the leadership and principal forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina to achieve increased democracy, tolerance and reconciliation among the different ethnic communities.

The return of refugees and displaced persons — in particular, the return of people to areas in which they are in the minority — reconciliation among different ethnic communities, minority protection, economic reforms and recovery, and freedom of movement for people, goods, services and information throughout the country are among the main outstanding issues that have to be comprehensively addressed to facilitate the establishment of viable statehood for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The return of refugees to all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a prerequisite for reconciliation in the country. Although the overall return process has been rather slow, it is encouraging to note that the recent increase in the minority returns has brought the figures to more than double the number of such return during the same period last year, and further efforts should therefore be made to promote them.

We continue to attach great importance to the role of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in bringing justice to the region. Unfortunately, despite the repeated calls of the international community, and in contravention of the Peace Agreement, some notorious indicted war criminals continue to remain free and disrupt the political affairs of the country. The continued freedom enjoyed by the leading indicted war criminals sends the wrong political message. Worse yet, it contributes to a climate of insecurity that limits refugee returns, particularly in minority areas. The arrest and prosecution of these indicted war criminals would not only serve justice, but would also contribute to accomplishing the long-term goal of national reconciliation, which alone can guarantee to Bosnia and Herzegovina the ability to free itself from the ghosts of its tragic past.

In view of this background, we hope that the recent developments in the region as a whole will be conducive to creating a new, positive momentum which could accelerate the pace of change and strengthen peace in a multi-ethnic, multicultural society in that country. We also hope that these developments will present an opportunity for progress on issues of succession and will pave the way for good-neighbourly relations and close cooperation among all Balkan countries, which is of great importance for the attainment of self-sustaining peace in the region.

Although a strong commitment of, and full cooperation from, the Bosnian leadership and the people at every level are imperative, durable peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina requires the full cooperation of its neighbours and the international community. Therefore, we believe that international assistance, in various forms, should continue, with a view to bringing about a self-sustaining peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the wider region.

We believe that continued commitment and serious efforts towards realizing a shared vision of Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent, unified, multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-religious State within its internationally recognized borders are the only way that will lead to a durable and just peace in that country and the Balkans.

We commend the ongoing work of the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina and of the United Nations International Police Task Force (UNIPTF). We also appreciate the relentless efforts made by the High Representative and Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sarajevo in furthering the peace-seeking objectives of the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the whole region.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to President Izetbegović, who resigned last October from the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He is an outstanding statesman and a respected leader, who worked assiduously for the political independence and territorial integrity of his country and the well-being of his people. We consider his departure to be a great loss to the peace process in the Balkans.

Mr. Islam (Pakistan): Bosnia and Herzegovina is a unique example of a country which, after the devastation of war, is trying to take the reins of its destiny back into its own hands. A war-torn nation is now struggling not only to consolidate its nationhood, but also to integrate itself into the international community. Five years ago, at Dayton, Ohio, the leaders of that devastated country committed themselves to rebuild peace. This commitment was all the more difficult because the very fabric of their society had been ripped apart. The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina deserve our highest admiration for their determination to abandon the way of violence. Despite daunting odds, their progress down the path to peace and reconstruction has been appreciable.

Yet peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains fragile. There can be no durable peace unless the ghosts of war can be laid to rest. The multi-ethnic society of Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to be protected from any recurrence of conflict. The basic requirement for this is an end to the deep-seated hatred that manifested itself during the brutal war and the re-establishment of mutual trust. This daunting task is made even more difficult by an absence of sincere commitment, largely on the part of the Serbian

community. Mutual accommodation and acceptance is a necessary condition without which it will not be possible to ensure reconciliation and strengthen the national institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We urge all parties, therefore, to make earnest and determined efforts to bring about peace for their peoples and for the sake of their children.

Faithful implementation of the Dayton Accords is central to durable peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a united, sovereign and independent State. While the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina has fulfilled its obligations to a large extent, we regret that the Republika Srpska is lagging behind in certain key areas. We are particularly concerned at the lack of progress by the Serbian entity in the return of refugees and displaced persons, freedom of movement across the inter-entity boundary line, cooperation with the International Tribunal for war crimes, the establishment of common institutions, judicial and police reform, and a host of other issues.

The return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes is a vital element in the reintegration process of the fragmented multi-ethnic society of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees and displaced persons is essential to reverse the consequences of "ethnic cleansing" and to heal, as far as possible, the deep and festering wounds that it caused during the long years of war. We call on all the parties, especially the Republika Srpska, to cooperate with each other in this vital area of national reconstruction.

Justice is the hallmark of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as it is elsewhere. All parties must implement their solemn commitment made at Dayton to pursue and apprehend war criminals. We note with concern that most of the war criminals remain at large, mostly in the territory of the Republika Srpska and Serbia. These criminals must be surrendered to the International Tribunal so that proceedings against them can be started without any further delay. Cooperation of the authorities in the Republika Srpska and Belgrade is essential for the apprehension of those accused of genocide and crimes against humanity. Strict and unconditional adherence to international law is essential to advance the goal of reintegration. We believe that those who participated in mass murders must not go unpunished anywhere in the world, be it in Srebrenica, in Kosovo, in Rwanda or in Jammu and Kashmir.

The international community needs to commit itself to the sustained revival of Bosnia's economic and social structure, which was devastated by three years of war. An integrated and comprehensive approach to economic reform which would contribute to a homogeneous development of the economy and trade in the two entities and across the inter-entity boundary line is essential. Ways must be found to speed up the pace of economic development and reconstruction in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The donor countries and the donor agencies must continue to provide financial and technical support to Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the same time, the three communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina have to recognize that cooperation in this area will benefit all sides and remove many of the obstacles to lasting peace in that country. It is therefore essential that the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina make concerted efforts towards establishing a multi-ethnic society that is economically vibrant and where respect for human rights and fundamental freedom enjoys primacy.

We recall with appreciation the integrity of the Secretary-General's report on the massacre of thousands of innocent people in the United Nations "safe area" in Srebrenica. This is an important document, and we commend the efforts made to uncover the facts concerning those unforgivable crimes in Srebrenica. It is our earnest hope that the Secretary-General, the Member States and the relevant organs of the United Nations will appropriately address the disturbing revelations in the report with a view to ensuring that such inhuman acts will never be allowed to take place anywhere in the world in the future.

We have long remained committed to peace and prosperity in Bosnia. During the war, Pakistan provided one of the largest troop contingents for the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a member of the Security Council at that time, we worked to bring about peace, but peace with justice. In those days of deep crisis, Pakistan extended moral, political, financial, technical and material support to the people of that country in defence of international law and morality as a sign of our solidarity with them in the hour of suffering. We continue to stand by the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina today. Our support is, as it was then, a manifestation of our conviction that no nation must be victimized because of its weakness and vulnerability, no people should be brutalized because of their ethno-

religious origins and no nation or people should be denied their inherent right to self-determination and the right to wage a legitimate struggle for freedom.

We believe in the resilience and strength of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in their ability to overcome the formidable challenges confronting them. The have come a long way and they deserve our full support in their efforts for national reconstruction. The international community must continue to provide unswerving support to a sovereign, united, multi-ethnic, multicultural and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina, at peace with itself and contributing to international peace and security. In this regard, we laud the recent participation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in United Nations peacekeeping efforts.

The draft resolution before this Assembly today embodies the principles and goals that must be accomplished to bring about a just and lasting peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Pakistan is a sponsor of this draft resolution and recommends its adoption by consensus.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/55/L.31.

I would like to announce that since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become co-sponsors of draft resolution A/55/L.31: Iceland, Liechtenstein and Tunisia.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/55/L.31.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.31?

Draft resolution A/55/L.31 was adopted (resolution 55/24).

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 45.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I wish to inform members of an addition to the programme of work of the General Assembly. On Monday, 20 November 2000 in the afternoon, the General Assembly will consider the reports of the First Committee. I should like also to inform members that, as announced in today's *Journal*, the third meeting of the open-ended informal consultations of the plenary on agenda item 182, "Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit", will be held on Tuesday, 21 November 2000, at 3 p.m. in Conference Room 1, to consider conference room paper A/55/CRP.1, copies of which are available in room 2925.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.